



HOMELAND SECURITY COMMITTEE

Statement of Subcommittee Chairman Dan Donovan (R-NY) Emergency Preparedness, Response, and Communications Subcommittee

“Protecting Our Future: Addressing School Security Challenges in America”

July 9, 2018

Remarks as Prepared

School may be out for the summer, but for parents, the security of their children while at school is never far from their minds. No parent should drop off a child at school and fear for his or her safety. But, unfortunately, we have seen too many incidents of violence at our schools this year alone.

Securing our educational institutions and ensuring a safe, healthy, and productive learning environment for our kids is a priority for me and for all of our witnesses here today.

Whether it be grant funding, guidance, technical assistance, threat and vulnerability assessments, training, or exercises, the federal government has a number of resources available to support states and localities as they work to secure our schools.

Working together in the aftermath of the tragedy at Sandy Hook, federal agencies developed the Guide for Developing High Quality School Emergency Operations Plans. Protective Security Advisors from the Department of Homeland Security’s Office of Infrastructure Protection have completed more than 1000 visits with K-12 schools to discuss security.

In light of the recent tragedies in Florida and Texas, federal agencies have taken an “all hands on deck” approach to this issue and have made a concerted effort to better coordinate the resources available for schools, including through the Federal Commission on School Safety.

The Fiscal Year 2018 Consolidated Appropriations Act provided more than \$2 billion in funding for grants that can be used to enhance the security of our schools: through the Title IV (4) grants at the Department of Education, STOP School Violence Act grants at the Department of Justice, or Homeland Security Grant Program at the Department of Homeland Security.

However, I am concerned that states and localities may not be aware that these funds exist or that they may be used to enhance school security.

This Subcommittee has a history of working together, including on this very important issue. Along with one of my predecessors, the Ranking Member requested a review of federal efforts to assist K-12 schools in conducting emergency planning and addressing security needs. Last Congress, he and I requested a follow-on review of efforts to assist institutions of higher education address security

needs. Both reports acknowledged the work that the Departments of Education, Justice, and Homeland Security are doing to support schools. However, they found that, in many cases, there was a lack of awareness of available resources and a need to better coordinate federal efforts.

I am eager to learn more about how the three federal agencies represented here today are working to coordinate the various forms of assistance so they are most beneficial to our state and local partners. I am also interested in how these agencies are conducting outreach to educate our state and local partners on these resources.

Efforts to secure schools must begin at the local level and I know that states and localities across the country have taken steps to address this important issue, including through security enhancements to school buildings, the assignment of school resource officers, increased information sharing with law enforcement, training, and exercises. It will be beneficial to hear about the innovative practices our second panel of witnesses are undertaking to provide security in their areas.

I am looking forward to our dialogue today and the opportunity to work together to ensure the safety and security of our children.

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